

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2013

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV RH BC
SUBJ: RHODESIA: VIOLENCE AGAINST UNARMED CIVILIANS

REF: STATE 164007

1. OUR FIRST REACTION IS TO RECALL THAT BOTSWANA GOVERNMENT HAS CONFRONTED PROBLEM OUTLINED REFTTEL FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS AND TO REVIEW WHAT GOB HAS DONE ABOUT IT FOR POSSIBLE GUIDELINES IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS OF WHETHER, WHEN AND HOW US CAN MAKE EFFECTIVE ITS POSITION ON SUCH BIOLENCE.

2. UNTIL APRIL 1977 (WHEN BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE (BDF) WAS FORMED), GOB EXPERIENCED THE SAME FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS IN THE FACE OF WHAT APPEARED TO BE UNMOTIVATED AND THEREFORE IRRESPONSIBLE VIOLENCE FROM RHODESIA. GOB ANALYSIS WAS TO RECOGNIZE THAT DEPLORABLE INCIDENTS OCCUR BOTH AS A RESULT OF CALCULATED MILITARY OPERATIONS (DUE TO INTENSE FEELINGS OF LOCAL COMMANDERS, AS DURING FEB 27 INCIDENT AT KAZUNGULA)
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AND HATREDS INSPIRED IN GUERRILLAS ("FREEDOM FIGHTERS") WHO RESORT TO DESPERATE ACTS OF VIOLENCE STEMMING FROM FRUSTRATION AS MUCH AS OVERZEALOUSNESS.

3. GOB HAS ATTEMPTED TO DISSUADE BOTH RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZED PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT IN RHODESIA AND FANATICS ON BOTH SIDES WHO ARE PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE TO NO ONE. PUBLICLY,

GOB MAKES CLEAR THROUGH PERIODIC HIGH-LEVEL PRONOUNCEMENTS (E.G., PRESIDENT KHAMA'S SPEECHES) ITS CONDEMNATION OF ARBITRARY VIOLENCE FROM WHATEVER QUARTER. PRIVATELY IT HAS AT THE SAME TIME (A) URGED PATRIOTIC FRONT TO RESPECT GOB TERRITORY, E.G., SPECIFICALLY ASKING THAT RAILROAD, GOB'S LIFELINE, BE EXEMPTED FROM ATTACK; AND (B) USED BDF TO DISARM AND INTERN GUERRILLAS ENCOUNTERED ON BOTSWANA TERRITORY. THE INCENTIVE OF PF AND THEIR FOLLOWERS TO COMPLY IS GOB THREAT (IF ONLY IMPLIED) TO WITHHOLD SUPPORT AND COOPERATION IN USE OF GOB TERRITORY FOR TRANSIT OF RECRUITS. WITH INDICATIONS THAT ONWARD MOVEMENT OF RECRUITS TO ZAMBIA HAS STOPPED, WHETHER FOR FINANCIAL OR OTHER REASONS, THE STRENGTH OF THIS GOB ARGUMENT HAS DIMINISHED. ON THE OTHER HAND, GOB AND RHODESIAN RAILWAY AUTHORITIES BELIEVE THEY HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN DISCOURAGING ATTACKS AND, INDEED, RHODESIAN RAILWAY OFFICIALS TOLD ME JUNE 27 THAT, WHILE THERE IS OCCASIONAL DISRUPTION OF SERVICE DUE TO SUBVERSION, NO SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED IN RECENT MONTHS.

4. THE RELEVANCE OF GOB EXPERIENCE ABOVE WOULD SEEM TO LIE IN ITS TWO-TIERED APPROACH. AS CONFLICT INTENSIFIES, PUBLIC CONDEMNATIONS, EVEN IN THE MOST MOVING LANGUAGE, REGRETTABLY LOSE EFFECTIVENESS. IN CASE OF US, OUR LEVERAGE WOULD APPEAR TO CONSIST LARGELY OF IMPLIED THREATS TO EXCLUDE VIOLENT PARTIES FROM NEGOTIATIONS, WHEREAS INCLUDING THEM IS RECOGNIZED AS ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVEMENT OF PEACEFUL SOLUTION. CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIVATE MEANS OF DISSUASION DEPEND ON THE STAKE THE OFFENDING PARTIES HAVE IN LISTENING TO US, IN OUR POWER TO GRANT OR WITHHOLD THINGS OF INTEREST TO THEM. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, PF CADRES RELIED ON US FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, OUR PUBLIC CONDEMNATIONS MIGHT HAVE SOME EFFECT. THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IS OF CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES INSPIRING FANATICAL BEHAVIOR ON BOTH SIDES AND UNCONTROLLED BY REASON.

5. IN BRIEF, MY RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE (A) THAT WE PUBLICLY CONDEMN SENSELESS KILLINGS AND OTHER VIOLENCE AT TIMES SUFFICIENT TO LEAVE NO DOUBT ABOUT OUR DEEP REVULSION AGAINST SUCH ACTIONS; (B) THAT WE USE FRONTLINE STATES TO CONVEY THE DEPTH OF OUR FEELINGS AND DEVELOP RELATIONS WITH RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZED LIBERATION MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP THAT WILL GIVE US GREATER ACCESS AND INFLUENCE THAN WE NOW HAVE. IF WE DECIDE, AS RECOMMENDED ABOVE, TO CONSULT WITH AND CONVEY OUR FEELINGS THROUGH GOB, WE SHOULD EXPECT IN TURN TO RECEIVE REMINDERS OF IMPORTANCE GOB ATTACHES TO ACQUIRING MEANS TO ASSURE ITS OWN SECURITY AS A FIRST STEP IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INDCRIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS TO BOTSWANA. NORLAND

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